
Higher Education Committee

HB 1794

Brief Description: Expanding access to baccalaureate degree programs.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Cox, Sommers, Fromhold, Priest, Sells, Moeller, Hasegawa, Conway, Ormsby, McCoy, Roberts, Kessler, Darneille, O'Brien, Murray, Dickerson, Lantz, Williams, Chase, Hunter, Lovick, Dunshee, Kagi, Morrell, Haigh, McDermott, Wood and Hudgins.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes three higher education branch campuses to begin admitting freshmen and sophomores while also expanding upper-division and graduate capacity and programs.
- Authorizes up to three community colleges to offer applied baccalaureate degrees on a pilot basis, subject to approval by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB).
- Directs Everett Community College to develop an educational plan for the North Snohomish Island Skagit (NSIS) consortium based on the university center model, including moving the consortium to the college campus.

Hearing Date: 2/15/05

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Branch Campuses

History: In 1989, the Legislature established five branch campuses in growing urban areas, to be operated by the state's two public research universities: University of Washington (UW) Tacoma and Bothell and Washington State University (WSU) Vancouver, Tri-Cities, and Spokane. The campuses were authorized to offer only upper-division and graduate education programs, in collaboration with local community and technical colleges which offered lower-division coursework to prepare students for transfer.

In 2004, after a series of reviews and studies regarding the role and mission of the branch campuses, the Legislature adopted Substitute House Bill 2707 which made a number of modifications to the statutes authorizing branch campuses, including removing WSU Spokane from designation as a branch campus. The legislation also directed each of the four remaining

campuses to conduct a comprehensive study and make recommendations regarding the future evolution of the campus. The campuses submitted their reports to the HECB in November 2004. The HECB was expected to review the campus proposals in the context of statewide goals for higher education and provide policy options to the Legislature in January 2005.

HECB Recommendations: According to the HECB, all four campuses should:

- Remain affiliated with their respective parent universities, but be permitted to grow and evolve to meet regional and community needs;
- Be funded with the same budgetary model as the regional universities;
- Continue to expand their upper-division and graduate programs;
- Be permitted to offer lower-division coursework linked to specific majors in fields not addressed by programs at local community colleges; and
- Continue and expand co-admission and co-enrollment agreements with community colleges.

The HECB also made specific recommendations for each campus:

- The UW Bothell should expand its partnerships with Cascadia Community College and other colleges before admitting freshmen and sophomores directly. However, this topic should be studied further by the HECB with a report from its staff by December 31, 2005.
- The UW Tacoma should gradually develop into a four-year university consistent with its proposed plan and admit lower-division students directly beginning in Fall 2007.
- WSU Tri-Cities should continue its model collaboration with Columbia Basin College but not expand into a four-year university at this time. This topic should also be addressed by the HECB in its December 31 report. WSU Tri-Cities should foster partnership opportunities with Pacific Northwest National Laboratories.
- WSU Vancouver should develop into a four-year university by expanding its offerings in all areas: upper-division, lower-division, and graduate/professional programs.

Applied Baccalaureate Degrees

In June 2004, the SBCTC undertook a baccalaureate capacity study that included analysis of statewide and regional demand for upper-division enrollment and review of options and costs for expanding capacity.

One of the study findings was a need to expand applied baccalaureate degree pathways for technical associate degree graduates. Currently, approximately 10 percent of these graduates transfer to a four-year degree program. These include technicians moving from their specialty into management and those planning to work at a more advanced level in their professional or technical specialty. According to the study, fields with demand for an applied baccalaureate degree include nursing; accounting; engineering, radiologic, and information technology; and management of technology, public safety, and food services.

One of the options used by other states to meet this need is granting authority to community or technical colleges to award baccalaureate degrees. The SBCTC conducted a review of 23 community colleges in other states, and concluded that Washington should also consider allowing a limited number of community or technical colleges to develop applied baccalaureate degree programs.

NSIS Consortium

In 1996, the Legislature directed the HECB to develop a plan for increasing higher education services in the North Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties area. The HECB recommended that multiple institutions collaborate to provide instruction and degree programs on four community college campuses throughout the region and at one unidentified fifth "hub" location. The City of Everett proposed that the consortium lease space in a new transit station to serve as a hub location, and the 1999 Legislature authorized funds in the capital budget to enable the consortium to tailor the leased space for educational purposes. Participating institutions began teaching classes at the Everett Station in March 2002.

In the Fall of 2004, 670 students enrolled in classes offered through the NSIS at the Everett Station. Two community colleges and four universities offer courses. However, most program offerings are for associate degree or master's degree students. There are also several professional certificates offered. It is not possible to complete a bachelor's degree at the Everett Station.

The NSIS is funded by a \$1.96 million appropriation to Western Washington University which acts as the consortium's fiscal agent. Funding covers operating and management costs; it does not include student enrollment.

Summary of Bill:

Branch Campuses

The top priority for each of the branch campuses is to expand courses and degree programs for transfer and graduate students. New degree programs should be driven by the educational needs and demands of students and the community, as well as the economic development needs of local businesses and employers.

The Legislature's intent is that each branch campus be funded commensurate with a regional university, rather than commensurate with its own unique mission.

At the UW Tacoma and Bothell, the top priority is expansion of upper-division and graduate programs. Beginning in the Fall of 2006, each campus may offer lower-division courses linked to specific majors in fields not addressed at local community colleges and may admit lower-division students in a co-admission or co-enrollment agreement with a community college, or through direct transfer for students who have accumulated about one year of credits. Direct admission of freshmen and sophomores may proceed gradually and deliberately in accordance with the 2004 plan submitted to the HECB. The UW Bothell is also directed to seek additional opportunities to collaborate with Cascadia Community College.

WSU Tri-Cities will continue providing a two-plus-two educational model, including innovative co-admission and co-enrollment options with Columbia Basin College, and expand its upper-division and graduate capacity and programs. The campus will also seek additional opportunities to collaborate with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratories. Beginning in the Fall of 2006, the campus may offer a limited range of lower-division courses linked to specific majors in fields not addressed at local community colleges and may admit lower-division students in a co-admission or co-enrollment agreement with a community college. WSU Tri-Cities may not directly admit freshmen and sophomores, but this topic will be the subject of further study by the HECB.

WSU Vancouver is directed to expand upper-division and graduate capacity and programs and continue to collaborate with local community colleges. Beginning in the Fall of 2006, the campus may admit lower-division students directly. By simultaneously admitting lower-division students, increasing transfer enrollment, and expanding graduate and professional programs, WSU Vancouver will develop into a four-year institution serving the Southwest Washington region.

The HECB will monitor and evaluate the addition of lower-division enrollment at the branch campuses and periodically report and make recommendations to the Legislature to ensure the campuses meet the statutory priorities.

Applied Baccalaureate Degrees

Up to three community colleges are authorized to offer applied baccalaureate degrees on a pilot basis. The SBCTC selects pilot colleges from those who apply. Criteria for selection include:

- The college demonstrates capacity to make a commitment of resources to sustain a high quality program.
- The college has or can readily engage faculty with the necessary qualifications and expertise.
- The college can demonstrate demand for the proposed programs from both students and employers.
- The program fills a gap because it is not offered by a public four-year institution.

After being selected, a pilot college can develop the curriculum for an applied baccalaureate degree. However, the SBCTC and the HECB must give final approval of the degree programs before the college can enroll students in upper-division courses. A pilot college cannot enroll students in upper-division courses before Fall 2006. Tuition for upper-division courses at the pilot colleges cannot exceed tuition at regional universities.

An applied baccalaureate degree is one specifically designed for individuals with an Associate of Applied Science degree in order to maximize the application of their technical credits, and is based on both theoretical and applied knowledge in a technical field.

NSIS Consortium

The Legislature finds that the NSIS consortium has not met the region's access needs for higher education and that the university center model of service delivery, centered on a community college campus with a single point of accountability, has proven more effective in developing degree programs and attracting students. Therefore, the Legislature intends to assign management and leadership responsibility for the NSIS to Everett Community College.

Everett Community College, in collaboration with community and business leaders, and other higher education institutions, will develop an educational plan for the region based on the university center model. The plan must provide for coordinated delivery of lower and upper-division courses, expansion of high-demand degrees and certificates, and include a timeline and cost estimates for moving the consortium to the college campus. Recommendations are due to the higher education and fiscal committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2005.

The HECB must define potential outcomes and develop performance measures for expanding access under the bill. A progress report on the outcomes is due to the higher education committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 7, 2005.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.